

Message Text

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SUBJECT: MINISTER CITES CRITICS OF USSR SHIPPING PRACTICES FOR
UNDERMINING CSCE

REF: 76 MOSCOW A-159

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SUMMARY: USSR MINISTER OF THE MERCHANT MARINE GUZHENKO
HAS CHARGED IN A RECENTLY PUBLISHED INTERVIEW THAT CURRENT
WESTERN CRITICISM OF SOVIET SHIPPING PRACTICES ARE "DIS
TORTIONS OF OBVIOUS FACT" AND ARE PART OF AN OVERALL
EFFORT TO IMPEDE PROGRESS AND PUT THE "SOCIALIST" COUNTRIES
ON THE DEFENSIVE AT THE UPCOMING BELGRADE MEETING.
ACCORDING TO GUZHENKO, INABILITY TO COOPERATE IN SHIPPING

COULD RAISE SOME DOUBTS ABOUT THE VALIDITY OF "BASKET-TWO" CSCE UNDERSTANDINGS. WHILE SUPPORTIVE OF EXISTANT USSR MARITIME AGREEMENTS WITH WESTERN COUNTRIES, GUZHENKO CALLS ON WESTERN GOVERNMENT MARITIME AUTHORITIES TO SET THE "APPROPRIATE POLITICAL CLIMATE" FOR DEVELOPMENT OF RELATIONS. SOVIET WILLINGNESS TO DISCUSS DISPUTED ISSUES AND TO JOIN SHIPPING CONFERENCES IS AFFIRMED, THOUGH THE LATTER IS STRONGLY LINKED TO "MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE" CONDITIONS. MARITIME RELATIONS WITH THE US ARE NOT SPECIFICALLY MENTIONED. END SUMMARY.

1. IN AN INTERVIEW PUBLISHED ON MARCH 16 IN LITERATURNAYA GAZETA AND CARRIED IN PART IN ENGLISH-LANGUAGE TASS, MINISTER OF THE MERCHANT MARINE GUZHENKO HAS SOUGHT TO DEFEND THE USSR AGAINST WESTERN CHARGES OF "DUMPING" AND "INTERFERENCE" IN INTERNATIONAL SHIPPING, TO EXPLAIN THE REASONS FOR SUCH ALLEGATIONS, AND TO DEFINE THE PARAMETERS OF SOVIET MARITIME RELATIONS WITH WESTERN COUNTRIES. MUCH OF HIS ARGUMENTATION REPEATS EARLIER THEMES, REPEAT; THIS MESSAGE CONCENTRATES ON HIS NEW POSITIONS.

2. AFTER DESCRIBING THE CURRENT "CRISIS" IN WORLD SHIPPING, GUZHENKO REBUTS CHARGES OF SOVIET "EXPANSIONISM" AS FOLLOWS: THE CURRENT TENTH PLAN (1976-80) AND PROSPECTIVE PLANS UNTIL 1985 CONTAIN NO "SENSATIONS" EITHER IN THE RATE OF GROWTH OF THE SOVIET FLEET OR TYPE OF VESSEL AND TESTIFY THE USSR HAS NO "GLOBAL AIMS"; SOVIET SHIPPING IS INVOLVED MAINLY IN CABOTAGE AND CARRIAGE OF USSR FOREIGN TRADE; AND THE LEVEL OF SOVIET PARTICIPATION IN "CROSS-TRADING" HAS LARGELY REMAINED LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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UNCHANGED.

3. ACCORDING TO GUZHENKO, CHARGES OF "DUMPING" ARE AN ATTEMPT BY THE WESTERN PRESS TO DEFLECT ATTENTION FROM INTERNAL ECONOMIC PROBLEMS IN WESTERN COUNTRIES. OTHER "INFLUENTIAL FORCES" USE SUCH ALLEGATIONS TO ENCOURAGE A "CONFRONTATION" BETWEEN THE TWO SOCIO-ECONOMIC SYSTEMS. LIKEWISE GROUNDLESS ARE ASSERTIONS THE SOVIET FLEET, AS STATE PROPERTY, DOES NOT AND WILL NOT OPERATE ON THE BASIS OR GENERALLY RECOGNIZED ECONOMIC CRITERIA.

4. GUZHENKO THEN SAYS THE "ABSURDITY" OF SUCH ALLEGATIONS COULD BE IGNORED, IF THEY DID NOT CONCEAL "POLITICAL MOTIVES." IN FACT, IF NORMAL COMMERCIAL COMPETITION AND, EVEN MORE, COOPERATION IN SHIPPING, IS ACKNOWLEDGED AS "IMPOSSIBLE" AS A RESULT OF THE DIFFERENCES IN ECONOMIC SYSTEMS, THE MANY "UNDERSTANDINGS" FIXED IN "BASKET TWO" IN THE FINAL ACT AT HELSINKI BY THE SAME TOKEN ARE ALSO "PLACED IN DOUBT." "CERTAIN PARTIES", HE STATES, EVIDENTLY WISH THE WESTERN

REPRESENTATIVES TO THE JUNE BELGRADE MEETING ONLY TO "PRESENT COMPLAINTS" TO THE "SOCIALIST COUNTRIES". THOSE WHO "CLAMOR" ABOUT THE ALLEGED SOVIET MILITARY THREAT AND WHO DISTORT SOVIET SHIPPING POLICY AND PRACTICES ALL HAVE THE SAME PURPOSE - "TO PREVENT THE WIDENING AND DEEPENING OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND THEREBY SLOW DOWN THE PROCESS OF DETENTE AND DISCREDIT THE MAIN RESULTS OF THE HELSINKI CONFERENCE."

5. DISCUSSING MARITIME AGREEMENTS WITH WESTERN COUNTRIES, GUZHENKO NOTES THE USSR HAS SIGNED SEVERAL SUCH PACTS "WITH MANY FOREIGN COUNTRIES, INCLUDING WEST EUROPEAN." MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL COOPERATION IS MAINTAINED WITH BELGIUM, ITALY, FRANCE, SWEDEN AND "SOME OTHER WEST EUROPEAN COUNTRIES". HE GOES ON TO SAY THAT IN THE PRESENT DIFFICULT SITUATION, ALL SHIPPING INTERESTS MUST EXERCISE "SELF-DISCIPLINE," AND ABSTAIN FROM "EXPANSIONIST" APPETITES. THE TIME HAS ALSO LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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COME FOR A "ROUND TABLE" DISCUSSION IN WHICH SOVIET SHIPPING COMPANIES WOULD PARTICIPATE ON AN "EQUAL BASIS."

6. FINALLY, GUZHENKO NOTES THAT SOVIET SHIPPING COMPANIES HAVE STATED THEIR INTENTION TO JOIN ONE OR ANOTHER SHIPPING CONFERENCE ON "MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE COMMERCIAL TERMS." EARLIER IT WAS ASSERTED IN THE WEST THE USSR WOULD NOT JOIN CONFERENCES. EVEN BEFORE THE ONSET OF THIS "CAMPAIGN" ONE AND ONE-HALF YEARS AGO, AND EVEN MORE AFTER, GUZHENKO ASSERTS, DEMANDS HAVE COME FORTH IN EFFECT FOR "CAPITULATION AND RECOGNITION OF THE INEQUALITY OF SOCIALIST COUNTRIES" COMPARED WITH THE "TRADITIONAL MARITIME POWERS".

7. COMMENT: CLEARLY THE NEW DEVELOPMENT IN GUZHENKO'S APPROACH IS THE ATTEMPT TO LINK CSCE AND CRITICISM OF SOVIET SHIPPING POLICY. SPECIFICALLY, HIS CASTING DOUBT ON BASKET TWO UNDERSTANDINGS SEEMS TO BE A BIT OF "SABER-RATTLING" DESIGNED TO REDUCE THE CURRENT CRESCENDO OF WESTERN COMPLAINTS. MOST DISCONCERTING TO HIM SEEMS TO BE THE PROSPECT OF A UNIFIED WESTERN POSITION AGAINST THE USSR AT BELGRADE ON SHIPPING MATTERS. AND HIS COMMENTS ON SOVIET MEMBERSHIP IN SHIPPING CONFERENCE INDICATE THE USSR WILL BARGAIN VERY HARD IN MOVING FORWARD IN THIS SPHERE.

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